

Community 220

3x5✓

White House, Kentucky

Johnson Co, Ky.

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very
good
A-B+

December 15, 1970

16 $\frac{3}{4}$ / 20 pts.

PREFACE

I chose not to name anyone specific that I got my information from other than Jesse Akers. My reason for this is that the people were often biased against certain things or people and they often let this true being exist only after I told them that their names would not be mentioned. I was astonished at the trust I received. I got most of my historical data from the late Jesse Akers several years ago. As for the most of the rest of my information I got that from elderly people. For some reason the older people trusted me more than did the younger ones. They were not bothered as much with the type questions I asked them as the younger people were. I received much praise from these people for trying to get a good education. This I believe played a big role in their cooperation with me.

I have included a sketch of White House which I have made reference to on a couple of occasions. It is page eleven.

White House is a small community located on the banks of the Big Sandy River approximately 14 miles from Paintsville as the river flows. The distance to Paintsville by car is approximately 21 miles. Paintsville is the county seat of Johnson County in which White House is located.

✓ The entire community of White House runs parallel to the river on one side. On the other side is a barrage of mountains unsuitable for house locations. Running through the center of the community is the C & O railroad tracks. Wandering along beside these tracks is the community road. The road is between the river and the railroad. The length of the present community is about one mile with very distinct boundaries.

White House has virtually no natural resources within its present boundaries. However, at one time, when it was a booming mining town, gas, coal, timber and suitable farm land were abundant within its boundaries. These resources still exist, but are no longer a part of White House. White House today is located only in the center of the domain of the town of the 1930's. There is a limited amount of land suitable for gardening in the community but often one can see this land laying idle during the gardening season.

The people are more closely associated with Paintsville than any other large town because it is their county seat. This is where they do most of their shopping for their necessities, such as, clothing, food, furniture and hardware.

✓ X The following glimpse of history is from a man in the community, Jesse Akers, who watched it grow and fall.

C. 1820 White House (first called Mount Carven) got its name from a big white house that was near the steamboat dock. White House is one of the oldest towns on the Big Sandy River. It was first settled about 150 years ago, but was not incorporated as a town until the early 1900's. At one time it had a population of between two and three thousand and a boundary several times larger than it has today.

The railroad first came to White House in 1890 because of the mining industry. A series of mining companies worked in White House, such as ^{Rittenhouse} Retenhouse, North Eastern, Colliers and the White House Mining Company. In 1902 the railroad came from Elkhorn City to join the railroad at White House. ?

✓ At one time White House was a major steamboat port. People would come from miles away to get such commodities as salt, which the boats brought in. The last steamboat come through in 1925 when its smokestack struck the White House swinging bridge.

At one time White House had two schools and a weekly newspaper called the "White Aux" put out by one of the mining companies. In the 1940's things began to dwindle away. The loss of the steamboats had hurt the community. Coal mining was also slacking down apparently because of poor management. Estimates from various knowledgeable

sources indicated that the last mine used could have lasted for thirty years under the techniques then being used. That was operating from the same central shaft and there was possibilities for the opening of other shafts. However in 1954 the last mine closed down taking away the backbone of the economy.

White House has passed its period of growth which was spurred by the coal mining industry and is now a skeleton with an ever dwindling population.

The community now has a population of slightly over one hundred people depending on the time of the year. By this I mean that some of the people go away and work in the summer months and come back to draw unemployment during the winter. Usually the men leave their families behind and return home on the weekends but sometimes they take their entire family with them, leaving their home empty. The change in population caused by these families is usually in area A, B and C shown on the map. The population as a whole is somewhat scattered out as can be seen on the map.

Of the adult population the majority are forty years of age or older leaving about one third of the population below forty.

Within the population of eighteen or above I don't know the age distribution because those most cooperating when I asked questions were among the elders of the community. They didn't know very much about the ages of the younger children. However I did find that only two children are

enrolled in high school and the rest of those of school age are in grade school.

As to sex distribution of the adult population is so equally divided that it is hard to give either sex an advantage over the other. This is due to the fact that with the exception of about seven persons everyone has a spouse. Of these seven, three are men and four are women.

It was again hard to decide the distribution of sex in the younger members of the community but from the information I received the female faction is slightly larger than the male faction.

Many of the men of the community who work do construction work. These are the ones that go away and work and then return home. These men, of course, work close to home when work is available and the pay is suitable. When they don't work year round, unemployment benefits supply their income. Approximately fifteen families do not work and have an income from retirement benefits, disability benefits, or some form of public assistance.

Only a few of the women work at public jobs. One woman is a nurse and commutes to Paintsville daily and another runs the White House Post Office. Other women sometimes get work outside the community and commute to and from their job. Such was the case when two women acquired jobs at the Princess Sewing Factory at Auxier.

With the exception of one job the community offers no employment. That job is running the Post Office, and community store which is there. This employs one person.

Agriculture goes no farther than gardening and deep mining is gone completely. The closest source of employment is the strip mining operation which operates some few miles away but it has little to offer to those who have no knowledge of machinery that is used in the stripping of coal and related tasks. I know of no one from the community who is employed by the stripping operation. This leaves the residents the one sided choice of going even farther from home to seek jobs. This however does not pose a great problem for the people as a whole because less than half of the family heads work. The other half ^{are} ~~is~~ receiving benefits, as ^{previously} ~~priorly~~ mentioned.

Education there is somewhat limited. One person has a college education. She is a life long resident of the community and has been retired for sometime. There are only four persons who have completed high school. It is possible for this number to fluctuate because several people have completed high school and then left. It is not inconceivable that these might someday come home to live. The rest of the community has an average of about five years of school.

It has been some time since someone who never lived in White House before has moved in. Instead people are moving out. As the youth grow into adulthood they usually go away to work and live, returning to their home community only to visit.

The community is presently receiving virtually no support from the county or state government. The only services performed are those of law inforcement, which are

scant, and the infrequent repair of the community road and swinging bridge. *done by whom?*

The families are a generally close knit group. They tend to stick close together at practically all times. They also try to live as close together as possible. *why?*

From interviewing housewives (once again I was limited to the elders) I found that the father has always been the dominating figure in the family but the mother has the greatest effect on the children. They are in charge of discipline and the father usually does not intervene until called upon to do so. Those that I interviewed said that this principle still *held* true.

Of the older couples I talked to, many of them met, dated, and married within the community. This tendency holds true for many of the younger set also. Within a period of the last three years *their* has been six *inter*community marriages out of a total of eleven weddings *effecting* the community. Two brothers both married within the community while one married outside. In another instance of three sisters, one married within the community and the other two married outside. In both instances one couple still lives in the community. All of those who married within the community, with the exception of one couple, are still living in the community. All of those who married outside the community are still living outside the community. There is also a couple who are living in the community who are presently engaged to be married. They are both in their twenties.

Those that I interviewed suggested that the problems of the younger couples were mostly: not enough income, drinking too much on the part of the male, and not being adjusted to married life. However of those interviewed the only problem they claimed to have was a lack of sufficient income.

Of twentyfour houses, not all occupied, ten of the families living in them claimed to own their own home, three families are making payments towards owning their own home. The rest are renting from someone. In some of the homes their is more than one family living. Such is the case in one particular family I know in which the son and his wife and little boy are living with his parents.

The government of this community is portrayed by one woman. She controls the church and did play a forceful role in the school until it was closed. She is the wealthiest person in the community and owns several of the houses rented by others.

The government this woman offers receives no financial backing and is executed by her. The community is somewhat wary of this woman but fear and respect have kept her going strong and fairly effective.

what does she do?

The community no longer has a school system. The children are either bused to Meade Memorial Grade School or Johnson Central High School, according to their grade level of course. They receive a fairly high level of education at both of these schools because of adequate facilities and teaching staffs. They also get to associate with a cross section of the county.

Relationships to other govt. structures - county, state, etc?

The local people have very little to do with the activities such as PTA meetings. The attendance at athletic events, however, is a different story.

There is one church in the community, (a Freewill Baptist). Services are held every Sunday and sometimes Saturday night. This church is watched over closely by the same lady that is the government of the community.

When church is held a quick glance around will tell you that community residents do not make up over half of the congregation, if, of course, you are familiar with the people of the community. The minister himself is not from the community.

The only activity of the church other than regular services is the annual picnic on the front lawn of the church yard.

The church is well respected in the community but not a great many of the people are church members or goers. Also true is that some of the church goers of the community are from dominations of other churches and travel away to worship.

There are no community supported recreation centers.. Recreation is created by the participants on the spot. It might be a basket ball game or a game of horseshoes. Many of the people like to play cards such as rook or poker. Games like monopoly are sometimes played but mostly in the winter months.

Everyone watches a great deal of television. Very few read books of any sort and only a very few read newspapers or magazines.

Do they go
elsewhere
for rec.?

Transportation to and from White House means automobile because,

outside of walking, that is the only way you can get anywhere. One can take the road directly out of the community or cross the swinging bridge shown on the map on foot to the river road and then, again, depend upon the automobile.

Communications means mail or telephone or, if you want to include one way (to the people from the media), there is radio, television, and printed news such as newspapers and magazines. All telephones are party lines. Television means a maximum of three channels if you have a good system and one if you don't. Radio will give you about four or five stations during the day. There are more stations available at night. There is no paper route going into White House so if you get a newspaper it is old news when you get it.

Electricity and public telephones are the only public utilities in the community.

Using education and economic status as controlling factors, most people would seem to fall into the upper lower or the lower middle class of people. There are, however, two families that would qualify for the upper middle class. *why?* There seems to have been no social mobility in the past five years because everyone has been the same with respect to everyone else without any change. *Elaborate*

The community has several problems: Its road needs repairing and it needs jobs for its people but the people are making out with these conditions the way they are. The big factor that is killing this community is that it is losing so many of its youth. It is now composed of a majority of

*Health, welfare
services,
etc.*

Elaborate

elderly people. They themselves are lacking in the education and leadership that it takes to build a strong community today.

It seems that they have decided to live with things the way they are, perhaps by choice or perhaps they just lack the initiative and understanding to try and change their lives very much. One of the elderly men said to me, "Our children go away to make a life and who can blame them if they never come home again for more than a visit".

The future of White House looks sort of gloomy. When the elders die, as did one woman just a couple of weeks ago and there aren't enough people to take their places.

If such is the case White House may become just a memory.